

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

POLICY DECISION

POLICY TITLE: Marine Protected Areas

POLICY NUMBER: POL-C3013

Cancels:

Effective Date: June 13, 1998

Termination Date:

See Also:

Approved by:


Fish and Wildlife Commission Chair

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are sites given long-term protection to protect and enhance some or all of the resources at the site and/or to facilitate some uses of the area. MPAs can serve a variety of purposes including:

- Research and Education Areas
- Protection of Unique or Sensitive Populations
- Fish Production and Fishery Management
- Protection of Habitats of Special Importance
- Non-Consumptive Use Recreational Areas

A variety of fish and wildlife resources can benefit from establishment of MPAs. Some fish resources require major reductions in harvest pressure and protection from removal as by-catch to establish productive populations of adults. Establishing such areas may be important tools to recover from past over-harvest or prevent future overharvest (e.g., rockfish in Puget Sound). MPAs can also provide areas for non-consumptive use of the resources, allow collection of baseline data on resources at the site, provide reference areas, and protect unique, sensitive, or important habitats and populations. They can facilitate integrated management of all resources within important habitats or areas.

General Policy: The Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife will use marine protected areas as one of the agency's working tools for resource protection and management. The Director will be responsible for plan development and implementation to manage consumptive and/or non-consumptive uses.

The management objectives for the use of marine protected areas are:

- Preserve, protect, perpetuate and manage the living resources of the state.
- Provide refuges for stocks, substocks, or populations.
- Protect unique or important habitats or species.
- Foster stewardship of unique or important resources or habitats.
- Provide research and education areas.
- Provide baseline areas or reference sites.
- Provide non-consumptive recreational opportunities.

All sites will not meet all objectives but many sites will meet multiple objectives.

The following management principles will be used:

- Designed MPAs are needed in Puget Sound to protect a variety of species, to promote the recovery of some over-harvested species and to protect important habitats.
- To the extent possible, MPAs will be established based on scientific principles and available data.
- MPAs will not be delayed until all potential questions are answered since recovery of some depressed or declining resources will rely on the timely establishment of sites. The agency will rely on existing information to determine resources of concern and begin selection of areas.
- Regulations adopted will be as simple as possible at individual sites and throughout the network.
- Within the constraints of the above principles and objectives, uses compatible with the type of site and resource needs will be permitted.
- Opportunities will be made available for public involvement by consumptive and non-consumptive users during development of the network of areas and site selection.
- The agency will use adaptive management, including good neighbor practices, to modify the sites and the network as data is collected.